

United States Congress

WASHINGTON, DC

February 7, 2024

NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee
700 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Members of the Committee:

For more than twenty years, March Madness has had its tip-off in Dayton, Ohio. During this time, Dayton has hosted the "First Four" or play-in games of the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament. As members of Ohio's Congressional delegation, we offer our strong support of the University of Dayton's application to continue that tradition. We also offer our strong support of their application to host the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament in 2027 and 2028.

With the exception of the tournaments impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the first games of the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament, now referred to as the "First Four," have been hosted by the University of Dayton and played at the historic University of Dayton Arena (UD Arena) every year since the tournament expanded in 2001. The arena is home to the Dayton Flyers basketball teams, whose men's team was ranked 21st nationally in average attendance last season, despite playing in a 'mid-major' conference. That passion carries over to the First Four, with UD Arena welcoming almost 25,000 fans over just two nights last year.

UD Arena's storied tradition of hosting NCAA tournament games stretches back to 1970, just one year after it opened. Since then, UD Arena has hosted more than 130 men's tournament games, including the first two rounds of the 2001, 2006, 2009, and 2013 tournaments. Dayton's First Four tradition even stole political spotlights in 2012, when then-President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron watched a game in UD Arena's courtside seats. UD Arena has demonstrated that they can successfully host the NCAA tournament in the past and is eager to do so in 2027 and 2028.

In addition to the community's passion for college basketball, Dayton is an ideal location to host these games. It's within a day's drive of more than half of the U.S. population and has three international airports within a hundred miles, making it convenient for visiting schools and fans attending the games. Because of its proximity to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the University also has a strong community partner committee to help lead a series of events and exhibits surrounding the games, including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) learning experiences and halftime shootouts for local students.

Ohio sports fans are the most passionate in the country. Fans pack UD Arena and provide an atmosphere worthy of the first games of March Madness; a crowd that is loud, energetic, and ready to erupt – for either team. Visiting coaches rave about their First Four experience at Dayton. UD Arena and Dayton, Ohio take pride in providing a first-class experience for the

visiting student athletes, coaches, and fans. You will not find a community more willing and able to make this event a celebration of college basketball and student athletes.

We urge the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee to continue the tradition of beginning the tournament in Dayton and select the University of Dayton to host First and Second Round games in 2027 and 2028. We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



JD Vance
United States Senator



Warren Davidson
Member of Congress



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress